



# ROUND THE STICKS

*Britain Progressively Raises the Closed-circuit Record by Over 100 m.p.h. in Eight Months*

**T**HOUGH the world's absolute speed record does not at present repose in this country there is deep satisfaction in the performance of British jet aircraft round closed circuits of 100 kilometres. No fewer than four international records (the latest is subject to confirmation by the Federation Aeronautique Internationale), have been set up over courses of this distance since August 31st, 1947, providing incontrovertible proof that our "jets" are endowed with unsurpassed qualities of manoeuvrability at extreme speeds.

Post-war rivalry started in this country when Mr. John Cunningham averaged 496.88 m.p.h. during the memorable Lympne meeting in August last year. His mount was a standard de Havilland Vampire I fighter, with Goblin turbo-jet rated at 3,000lb static thrust, and he beat the previous record, held by Lt. R. Baird of the U.S.A.A.F. in a Lockheed P-80 Shooting Star, by 3 m.p.h. The weather was fine but a gusty wind was blowing.

It was not altogether surprising that the Gloster Aircraft Company, having, in their Meteor IV, a much faster but nevertheless highly manoeuvrable machine, should set out to better Cunningham's performance. After an unsuccessful

attempt late in January, Sqn. Ldr. "Bill" Waterton put up, on February 6th, an average speed of 515.89 m.p.h. over three circuits, each of 20.78 miles. He flew a standard R.A.F. Meteor with two Rolls-Royce Derwent V turbo-jets having a combined static thrust of 7,000lb. With the wind gusting up to 25 m.p.h. the flight was uncomfortable, and Waterton expressed dissatisfaction with his speed. Later, when the light was failing, necessitating the use of navigation lights, he took the Meteor round a 62.2 miles circuit, having five turns, at 542.945 m.p.h., and landed with the aid of Very lights. Again his trip was uncomfortable, and he felt confident that he could improve on his speed, but no further flights were made. In better conditions he might have added at least 20 m.p.h.

Rumours that Vickers-Supermarine were preparing to put the Attacker round a 100 km course were confirmed on February 26th when Mr. M. J. Lithgow, a Supermarine test pilot, flew the first Attacker prototype with a single Rolls-Royce Nene turbo-jet, round a course measuring 62.235 miles. The turns were the Chilbolton control tower; Pepper Box Hill, south of West Grinstead; the runway intersection at Ibsley; and the tower at Arnewood Sway.

